of the Nancy Home of
Sister of Mary,
'Calvary', Sudbury Hill

Wed. July 6th

Harrow, Middlesex

Not meant to be read as a letter — too weary — just stuff put down all muddled up for my old pal Taplow. Blood has writes in bed is it not.

My Dear René,

Thanks you very much for yr ~~letter~~ letter headed ~~'June', Shan 1970 & the admirable photographs of the wall inscription~~.

Shan June 1970 with the admirable wall inscription — is Shan the Irish word for June? is so, do they pronounce it more or less as the word for John, Shône or what not — or quite otherly? I ask only because it's roughly the same ubiquitous name that half-Xtendom seemed to be called ~~in~~ some form. ~~[illegible]~~ by the 16th Century, anyway, which accounts for the ludicrous number of Joneses in the London Telephone Directory, let alone in Wales herself.

The legal insistance by the Eng. administration that all Welshmen must have a surname in the English manner (at the period of of the acts of Union in 1536 – 1540.) at least provides us with one bit of ~~[illegible]~~ factual information: it means that 'John' — (in Welsh it took several forms, Ioan, ~~[illegible]~~ Iian, Shôn, & many variations of these was by far the commonest name to give a child at baptism, or 'Jac', 'Shonni' etc by his mates) & that Gwilym (William), Robert, ~~or Rhosier or~~ Rhisart (Richard) & the various other very limited number of Welsh 'surnames' (not surnames at all really, but personal or christian names ~~[illegible]~~ made to serve as surnames. Hence the inordinate number of Mrs Williams, Miss Joneses, Mr Robertses & Thomases abounding to-day; and even Jenkins is of the source as 'Jones' — a sheaf of John.

But why, I wonder, were John the Baptist (& the Evangelist I suppose), St Thomas, William, Robert & a few more, so overwhelmingly popular ~~[illegible]~~ in so many differing countries in the late middle-ages. For that matter the French lords in the 13th Cent, used Jac as a generic term for the peasants & co did they ~~[illegible]~~ not?

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It lies also ~~but~~ been pointed out that it was not until the reign of Henry V (Agincourt) that in England itself a man was compelled to have a fixed surname in any legal proceedings

So the insistance of such as Thomas Cromwell, Bishop Lowland Lee, president of the court of Wales & the March in the crucial years of the total unification of Wales with England & of the suppression of the monasteries (in 1536–9) & the insistance that no man held office in Wales unless he spoke & wrote in the English tongue, quite accidently ~~[illegible]~~ disclosed that ~~were just as common as Xtian name~~ John, William, Harry, were just as popular in the Welsh lands as elsewhere.

What was not understood by the officials, or if understood, totally ~~[illegible]~~ disregarded, was that in the Welsh system & usage, one's father's personal Xtian name was in no sense a 'surname' ~~as~~ any ~~word~~ more it was the Antiquary Word. — I dont think we ~~[illegible]~~ know the personal name of Vergil's father, — we know he was of the family of the gens of Maro. & that his mother's name was Maia — it was rather like that with the Welsh — what mattered was not that one's father was called John, but that he was a John of the line of Iestyn son of Gruffydd Hên, founder of that branch of the family long settled in such & such a name Velly-way & that, moreover, that Gruffydd was of the descent of ~~the~~ Madawg, of the family of the rulers ~~[illegible]~~ or lords (arglwyddi) of Cyfeiliog in the province of Powys, long, long ago.

However all that may have been, and it was real enough to the prisoner at the bar. Let's call him Tewdur ~~[illegible]~~ ab ~~[illegible]~~ of John, inshorted of sheep-lifting near the Shrinkire-Denbigh border & his wife Gwladus ~~[illegible]~~ Lowri (Laura) of carding & spinning the wool & making outrage profit of the trade at Ruthin market. Let's suppose, ~~[illegible]~~ (a most unlikely supposition) that the case could not be proved — so there was no hanging of Iestyn, none the less in future, ~~[illegible]~~ his Xtian name and had best remember ~~this~~, was ~~[illegible]~~ Tewdur or Tudor or one of the other forms of that name

ferch (daughter of)

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& his surname John & that his little son Gwylim had best be write down William John and his wife Gwladus (of ancient & noble stock from Gwynedd east of the Conway) was more conformably written in the language of the King's Dominion of England & Wales as Gladys, wife of Tudor John. In course of time their descendants would ~~without~~ almost certainly ~~[illegible]~~ add to the multitude of Joneses.

~~[illegible]~~ After a few generations the far past greatness or status of these particular Joneses would be wholly forgotten — & all this the result of 'John' being so popular a 'font-name' ~~[illegible]~~ over a quite long period of the ~~[illegible]~~ latish medieval period. It's a very odd result. & although Rowland Lee, Bishop of Lichfield & Coventry & ~~[illegible]~~ then of Chester, was a northcountryman who ~~[illegible]~~ had contempt for all things Welsh — or to be more accurate was wholly unconcerned with anything that ~~[illegible]~~ in any way, was not strictly conducive to the central control of the curia regis under its worthy prince, the ~~[illegible]~~ Renaissance King, Henry VIII, even he, that blood of Roland Lee, President of the Court of ~~[illegible]~~ Wales & the March over the ten crucial years, even he, could not have so arranged things that 'John' and a few other Xtian names chanced to be so universally ~~[illegible]~~ popular — As to the reasons why, it was an absurdity to make a a 'surname' of a Welsh person's ~~[illegible]~~ father's Xtian name that would not have been of the remotest interest to him — for all things Welsh that militated in any way against the rapid & total "anglization" desired by the King or, more strictly, by Thomas Cromwell was, to Bishop Lee hateful as being above all 'disorderly', a thing of the past, lacking in 'civility' & perhaps above all, 'poverty stricken' — He complained most scornfully ~~[illegible]~~ of the slack ~~[illegible]~~ of means, of hard cash, of solid ~~[illegible]~~ prosperity among all the 'gentry' of north Wales.

Strange as it may seem he who was so determined in the total unification of

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England & this fringe of an older order, Wales, was strongly opposed to the making into shireland of parts of Wales — presumably because he did not consider the areas adequately run & responsibly developed, as yet. Without any book of reference of any sort at hand I can't say more. I imagine he regarded other parts round the border of northern Shropshire — beginning round a property where Owain Glyndwr had had his "hall" of considerable elevation, at Sycharth — totally put to the flames of 'Prince Hal' and his other separate lands in Cynllaith Owain and the joining cantrev of Mochnant (I think) which run into to the wilder parts of Powisland.

Bishop Lee is reported to have changed some 5,000 (five thousand) ~~in the area along~~ Welsh outlaws, rotters, rebels, ~~above~~ in this Cynllaith Owain ~~or~~ adjacent means alone. This figure sounds too high, ~~and~~ we know how unreliable historical statistics are, but, I believe the evidence is considered ~~fairly~~ reliable (17th cent. of thirty) and considering the whole area is about 15 miles by 20 miles, ~~so~~ the smallness of the 16th population half that number would be quite a lot. Anyway Lee & ~~the~~ relentless methods of his agents made a great impression. The settled, prosperous, in the lands in North Wales & the Vale of Glamorgan in the south & all the Welshmen to whom no Tudor could do ~~wrong~~ wrong spoke highly of Lee's fearless methods in hanging all & sundry of these bands in the wilder parts of Mawddwy & Meirionnydd & ~~elsewhere~~ elsewhere in fastnesses of the ~~[illegible]~~ mountain crags & thick woodland of mid Wales. Lee's brother was ~~[illegible]~~ Archbishop of York. He had first come into contact with Cromwell when he was working as a notary or solicitor with Cardinal Wolsey touching the dissolution of some religious houses, for, as you know, Worlesley was in on the suppression before Cromwell.

The Owain in Cynllaith Owain has no reference to Owain Glyndwr, but was one of the Welsh Kantrevs of which is now, I suppose, part of Denbighshire

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Barlow (?) the Eng'l Bishop of S. Davids was anxious of Cromwell's agents in doing his damnest to destroy all relics of the Catholic Faith he could lay his hands on, and as Bishop of S. Davids he had plenty of opportunity — we know he destroyed or sent to the spoil-dump 'old books of superstition' & other objects — so what was lost to Wales by Barlow alone we shall never know.

Strata Florida was the other, or perhaps the greater, repository of the Welsh past. Not only the burial site of the princes of the South & the patron of the poetic art, not only before the Edwardian destruction of the things of Court of Aberffraw, but, four hundred years later, in the Glyn Dŵr rising the sympathies of the Cistercians of Strath Flur were the Welsh rising, is shown by the using of the sacred place as horse-stalls for his cavalry, not in the outer buildings, but in the nave & sanctuary up to the mensa domini. Medieval man was a strange creature, just as ludicrously contradictory as we ourselves. As you know Dafydd ap Gwylim was buried with the Garth of Strata Florida. At the dissolution, the community (we don't know how many) did not give over the buildings to the Kings officers, but slipping away into the wild & beautiful land outside. It had been charged against the abbot — previous to the Order of Suppression that he allowed material to be set up & used for the making of illicit coinage to the harm of the Kings realm, within the abbey lands, further it was said that his nephew 'Dafydd the Fierce' was known to be leader of of band of outlawed men in the woods some miles north of Abbey. Supposing this to be true, Dafydd's band would be linked, may be, with the 'Red haired bandits of Mawddwy' a Grow which troubled the authorities much later on — in Eiz I's reign. Anyway, tradition is very strong that numbers of the Cistercian's of Strath Flur, including the abbot, refused the Kings pension &

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disappeared into the wild lands, ~~to say~~ mass. Their parishioners ~~could~~ only be the wild determined remnant who had fled into the fastnesses of ~~[illegible]~~ west Powys & Ceredigion. The ~~[illegible]~~ northern ways of Gwynedd, the old home of defence & freedom ~~[illegible]~~ were too dangerous now owing to the gentry from Chester to Holyhead being well in with the bloody Tudors & the officials who guarded the northern coast road to Ireland — just as ~~[illegible]~~ the south road to Ireland ~~[illegible]~~ was held pretty firmly by thoroughly reliable 'Tudor'-made & families from Monmouth, Glamorgan, Carmarthen ~~[illegible]~~ Fleming-infested 'Pembroke'. There was then, for the first & may be the last in Welsh history that any form of resistance would tend to come from Mid-Wales. It is just possible, so it seems to me, that among those assented five thousand Welsh felons hang by that ~~[illegible]~~ abbe, fearless, ruthless, totally Erastian man of the new order, Dr Lee, there were a certain percentage of Welshmen & women, who rather than accept the terms of their lords (the descendants of the arglweddi of the old days of the principes many of whose fathers had rallied to Glyn Dŵr, or who after the disappointed hopes had turned first to William Herbert, then, after the ~~[illegible]~~ Market Bosworth affair, to a pathetic 'mafeikin' stampede to the bogus Dragon of Cadwaladr in 'that Breton Richmond') but who had no alternative but to seek the greenwood with the Welsh 'Friar Tucks', 'Robin Hoods' and inevitable 'maid Marian's' or rather the few cast-out White Monks had no 'cure of souls' at all unless they mingled, is possible, with this strange mixture of, so to say, professional felons and quite ordinary Welshmen who held to the Catholic faith. & who still believed, somewhere deep within, themselves of no lord who would come again & who, if taken in by a dream were at least not taken in by the Tudor policy but conquered most

Tudor maintained

I think countrymen to ostlers in Indian Prince to Cecil of Burley himself

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There are certain authentic bits of MSS that there was this attenuated connection between some of the makers of the suppressed Religion Hollow & these lawless brands in the inmost wilds. What evidence there is shows that this was confined to Welsh Houses of religion outside the immediate vigilance of Cromwell's police. - It was extremely difficult; unless one was asking for death on the quaternary block, to do anything except by craft & caution in the more prosperous and settled parts of Wales. There were in Wales no great leaders of high nobility, like the Nevilles or other nobles of the North of England where a whole, thought out system running through the entire society of noble & gentry & yeoman farm hand was solid - and even then the Pilgrimage of Grace was tricked & destroyed by Master Cromwell. But in Wales the great men were so stupified by the Tudor name that was no hope of leadership at all or so ineffectual as to be useless. Later on, in the late 16th & early 17th cent. things changed but it was too late then - & anything had blanched the 'two nations' Anglicized upper strata & Welsh peasantry had already got well under weigh. "Young Rhys Fychan Ceber son of Yr Arglwydd Rhys ab Iestyn ap Gwylim Law Hir, so I am tred wishes to be called Mr Rees - if that's the result of shending three years at Coleg Iesu, Rhydychen, he'd far better have been orally instructed in the significance of all the names in the chwedlau (story) I Calhwch ag Olwen - mind of you, he had discovered (by accident, not so much as heard more than a word. That's what it does to them - imitation Englishmen, and not much good at that, either. Oh yes, to be sure, packed with tags from Lladin a Groeg authors of old time, a bit of Italian & some Traine of course, but scarce a word of Yr hên iaith, Less than the chapman fm over the Dyke. Think of his taid (grandfather) who would pull one up sharp at a single error in Welsh phonetics let alone grammar. Well, that's how it goes

Rhydd, tough + ychen cattle.

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Master Rees our future lord of the manor when his father Rhys ab Iestyn be under this mound along with the great lords of the past. However that may be, this young ~~[illegible]~~ lace-frigged 'Rees' be off this morning with his pair of pistols charged in his holsters & his hand on his lime-worked silver sword hilt, to fight for Siarles Stuart ~~[illegible]~~ now King of England as if the line of Aberffraw still ruled in Britain.

These conscripted countrymen of our bars, ploughmen, hedgers & the like — it's long ~~[illegible]~~ since they were trained in war, a century & more, & far longer still to fight under their own leaders for the freedom of Cymru. — they make but poor soldiers so I'm told. And ~~[illegible]~~ the German Prince from the Rhine has been heard to say openly that he prayed reserves be sent him from Ireland or the shires of Enhaw, or indeed from anywhere, except Wales... as they are the ~~[illegible]~~ infantrymen he'd ever seen. & he wanted none of them. — 'its strange, for in days far back they had the reputation of being men of skill in arms.

Siarl or Siarls.

In Welsh you cant pronounce 'Charles'. The C would be always hard. The Ch would be in some way approximate to ch in Scotch loch. -arl would be O.K. with the r trilled. But they get get round it by making an i following S into a Charles sound. They do it notably in the English-loan word 'Shop' which would they speak siop. It's a get out really, a convention, for the Welsh S is the same as the English 's' in 'see' or Sally — never as a Z. And the Welsh i is "continental", = ee, a pure vowel. But by continuing S & i they form the 'ch' sound in Charles & a few other loan-words.

It was, I suppose the later part of the Stuart period that looked as if the Welsh language would become a more patois of upland peasants but for a new or reasons things changed. The Hanoverian interest in 'antiquities' then the whole romantic movement in its many many aspects in the 18th century carried forward, however differently in the 19th cent. well ~~[illegible]~~ played its part. But it remains the absolute refusal of the ordinary Welsh peasant of very varying districts to use any language other than Welsh that really determined the matter. And it was this that created 'the two nations'. & of course the two 'sibyls' informing the thought processes of the 'gent' in his county-seat, boasting of his descent from the Welsh lords of old time. But wholly divided (by linguistics alone, about other matters) from his tenantry, ~~[illegible]~~ peasants or (here & there) agrarymen & others of the just-beginning 'industrial world'.

Text

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There are clauses written into the title-deeds of e.g. methodist chapels in the ~~[illegible]~~ coal-valleys of Glamorgan making it illegal & unlawful for any any language other than Welsh to be used in the building. This presented a real solid problem for years and quite recently, when the heart the whole of the Rhondda Valley Area has been English-speaking overnight as it were. The Mining Companies (used for the construction of saps & other works in my war were virtually all Welsh-speaking Welshmen — were they required now they would be almost wholly English in speech.) ~~The~~ This was a Welsh Division and I'm not suggesting that other divisions employed Welsh miners. But it's a highly skilful & unpleasant task.

I remember the stacks of short wooden props used to make secure the sustaining-wall of the saps — the characteristic of all these suppress bodies & the earth was a horrible bluish-grey slimy mud — I exhaust in making especially of the Grenincy-Cuincy (La Bassée area) where sapping & counter-sapping was continuous — because it I used only have been the color of the sub-soil I suppose. But I can recall the unpleasing smell of that blue earth almost as clear as that of the absolute unique stacks of engineer's dumps — mainly of rusted wire of ~~[illegible]~~ & newly cut lengths of soft-wood, for revetting-frames.

Anyway, I'm only 74 & though I don't know the linguistic statistics, I would guess that when I was 21 in 1916 the census of the people would have shown a startling higher percentage of Welsh-speaking inhabitants of Wales than now. In spite of the wholly commendable & encyclopaedic battle to retain what's left of my hen iaith.

I know that in the census of ~~[illegible]~~ the division ~~[illegible]~~ was acted. ~~[illegible]~~ equal. with English already somewhat gaining. — I think that in Burrows Wales (1854) the division was

Somewhat in favour of Welsh ~~not sure~~.

If, as it is my amateur view it did, the destruction of the House of Aberffraw, the total elimination of any reality of native Princely rule in Wales, in 1282, draws a line across Welsh history that cannot be trimmed down, made light of or understood for ok than the completion of the conquest intended by William the Conqueror, but with history delaying for 200 years, but with Edward Plantagenet was determined to complete. Hist ~~of title~~ the assumption of the title: 'Earl of Chester' ~~as Prince of Wales~~ was a mere prelude to 'Prince of Wales', then the next stock was ~~in~~ another two hundred years later. When Master Thomas Cromwell made one & totally unity the King's Dominion of Eyhlar & Wales, denied to the Welsh language any actually legal status — English, the tongue of the King's realm being the only language in courts of law ~~and~~ in legal transactions —

This was the master stroke, the creation of the 'two nations'. It has taken some centuries to work, but once English became the language, first of the nobility, then of the great gentry, then of the lesser than of all who wrote 'get on in the world' the result was virtually certain.

The successive census lists showing language for the last century alone, leave no doubt that in spite of ~~the~~ attempts at encouragement in place of plain, brutal, ignorant, impudent, governmental suppression, (cf. The Times 1860) & worse still, the ~~[illegible]~~ Education Acts of the 1870s, there are now ~~of~~ tolerant, ~~[illegible]~~ benign & ~~[illegible]~~ encouraging measures to attempt to sustain the life of Welsh in Wales, the next Census will show a sure decline.

Text

To return to that ch sound in 'Charles'. You know that place where Dylan Thomas & Vernon Watkins were born, Laughan. I never knew how to pronounce it. It was not not English & it was not Welsh. Then I discovered that its Welsh name was Tal-acharn — or Lacharn (two syllables 'Lach-arn' — so that made sense

Note

~~[illegible]~~ contin. to prev. page

or at least one could pronounce it — whereas with 'Langhan' one had no idea [illegible] Thesis, which one near it of similar difficulty, Langhan I think, [illegible] pronounce it as one syllable.

But the mystery is solved [illegible] that [illegible] like Bychan (Vychan) [illegible] syllables, being small in some way, [illegible] junior became [illegible] adjectives, [illegible] a [illegible] Vaughan in English, and [illegible] Welsh, Vaughan — as in [illegible] great & various [illegible] families of Vaughans — the Vaughans of Golden Grove [illegible] Vaughans of Tretower [illegible] Vaughans of Castle Somery [illegible] of Herefordshire, [illegible] Vaughan [illegible] the [illegible] Fychan [illegible] Fychan [illegible] Fychan [illegible] Owain Gyn[illegible] [illegible] was Owain ap Gruffydd Fychan ap Gruffydd, [illegible] [illegible] 1240 — [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] temporal peers

[illegible] Oct 1884, [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] and was [illegible]

[illegible] council [illegible] ministers, was

[illegible] Army [illegible]

[illegible] of Prussia &

[illegible] punishment

[illegible] King. But I regret to state [illegible]

[illegible] have been carried out in the [illegible]

[illegible] and was [illegible] in a [illegible] to

[illegible] overland. Whenever there was in his station of

[illegible] which said him, as it had his [illegible]

[illegible] in a [illegible] of an [illegible]

[illegible] Hymen [illegible] he was [illegible]

before Hymen [illegible] penalty & his sons [illegible]

[illegible] savage [illegible] penalty

[illegible] life, his complete [illegible] with a [illegible] of [illegible]

[illegible] the House of Gyneceid was

[illegible] to the complete [illegible] the 'regalia' of

[illegible] princes (Cf. the Scottish Stone of Scone) were

taken to Westminster & [illegible] part of the

[illegible] relics such as

[illegible] of the True Cross — and the [illegible]

[illegible] Tintagel (circa [illegible] of Arthur) was

been carried to the Tower to the Abbey [illegible]
studied much of [illegible] [illegible]
Women [illegible] [illegible] to [illegible] [illegible]
1970's — [illegible] [illegible]
in the 17th Cent. when [illegible] [illegible] the
Royal insignia destroyed [illegible]
There is a total [illegible] of [illegible]
[illegible] something ~~belonging~~ WELSH [illegible]
of the [illegible] — [illegible]
for example the [illegible] of [illegible]
North Wales [illegible] Aberffraw on Anglesey
[illegible] not [illegible] ~~[illegible]~~ [illegible]
has survived. There is [illegible] village [illegible]
Aberffraw — the [illegible] [illegible] Prince
but ~~[illegible]~~ not even [illegible] of the
little stream the [illegible] [illegible]
Nor does [illegible] [illegible]
Welsh chieftains [illegible] [illegible]
with a [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] in [illegible] ~~[illegible]~~ [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] ~~[illegible]~~ [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] but [illegible]
constantly shifting sand banks [illegible]
[illegible] have made [illegible]
flying aircraft in [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] ~~[illegible]~~ [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] Aberffraw [illegible]
[illegible] Norman [illegible]
[illegible] matters [illegible] In the 13th
century Llywelyn the Great, [illegible] of Joan [illegible]
of King John of England) [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of the Welsh [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible]
the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] opposite [illegible] Anglesey [illegible]
[illegible] village [illegible]
[illegible] Aber [illegible]
[illegible]

gardens, main hall, apartments for the princess & her maids, accommodation for the princes' mounted bodyguard, stables, horses, God knows what all.

Similarly, [illegible], I think, would remain of great architect.

Later, after Edward's destruction of all that he [illegible], he got permission from the Ecclesiastical authority, to remove the Cistercian Abbey on the Conwy at Aberconwy to another site, (I think at Maenan) and used the abbey site as the foundation for his new castle of Conwy & its walled-town of English burgesses and citizens, so we know nothing of any Welsh below these & of course, more extensive works.

But one would expect by some chance or other that bits of evidence would turn up.

There is the empty stone coffin of Llywelyn the Great (d 1240) that [illegible] Bangor Fawr yn Arfon, but removed to find itself in the possession of the Wynns of Gwydir (I don't know where it is now) — the empty stone sarcophagus of the greatest of the native princes of Gwynedd between (in round figures) 1100 and 1300 & signifies the connecting sweep away of everything Welsh in that period. [illegible] Genuinely Welsh in the visual arts.

The survival, & indeed bursting out, of Welsh metric forty years after the conquest has confused the issue for Welshmen & Englishmen alike — they do their best to show that conquest in the field & alien rule can do nothing to impair the genius of a people & that the Classical Age of Welsh metric was after the conquest of her native princes and the peak of it in Dafydd ap Gwilym (contemporary of Chaucer)

Even an historian as great as Richard Powicke (Shelby) balances & trying like hell to be 'fair', — fails, in my view,

to make it clear that the virtue of arts, ~~especially~~ especially one of the arts very beloved of a given people can develop its subtlest inventions under all sorts of odd conditions — indeed the very conditions may seek compensation in especially difficult complex forms. The 'poetry of the Nobility' as this very late 14th & entire 15th cent. Welsh metric is compared with that of the 12th & 13th 'Age of the Princes' poetry proves nothing except some obvious thing such as that the English versification of the 17th Cent. was of a different feeling from that of Sir Gawayne & the Green Knight in the 14th. or Langland.

One can't, I think, truly say that the masterly developed, complex, work of the later chaps was more sophisticated, for the complex rules of the earlier stuff implies assimilating mastery.

It is true that in Wales, after the extinction of native rule, a baddie 'scholasticism' developed in the later 15 cent. (under the Yorkist Tudor, IV, for example) in which regulations for writing all kinds of verse, run wild. A ludicrous academism, difficulties piled on difficulties in order to discover the most skilled of bardic schools was imposed. As one would expect this excessive pedantism, this turning of the screw turned out to cause chaps chaps to write in what is called 'free metre' — that was not to be not 'free verse' as we use the words to-day, but it did mean the writing of strictly Welsh poetry in verse-pattern outside the thousand years old tradition of the given bardic schools.

This new late 15th & 16th cent. free verse is a continuer, to be now to-day. It was not wholly divorced in the Welsh traditional metric but now became far more general. So that while (e.g.) a Welsh Elizabethan sea-captain might skillfully & with care commonly some verse usually in praise of Tomorrow (just as was the main occupation of the bards, eulogy, praise, elegy etc.) so he, a Welsh summary of some of the Queen's ships, might sit in his after cabin & work on a few lines with strict & exact attention to the rules of one or other of the permitted twenty-four (I think) measures of Welsh verse as laid down by the bardic academies. Of the night

[illegible]

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just as likely, write some verses in in English & using English rules of rhyme. Both were quite common, with the English habit against the Welsh. Or he might be a ship's master, like Thomas Jones(?) of Plas Iolyn (?) a land-owner, soldier, sea-captain, merchant, typically 'Tudor', who in a engagement with a Spanish ship got the worst of it & had to break off the fight with half his boarding-party in the hands of the Spaniards. & make for home as fast as he could. It is an extraordinary bit of work technically: Most of the words are written in English but spelt as in Welsh. The words of command are all in English – but some of the descriptive bits, such as gwris y dryn or drin, 'smoke of battle' are in Welsh. Actually it works amusingly and the English words are given a very exact pronunciation in Welsh. After the defeat & surrender got away, there is a line It always reminds me of Carmen Crane who died cartagear, & who was for many years secretary to Tom Burns. For some reason the line amused her greatly. It went in the 'Welsh' text 'Garris yw the beer is sour' & simply means that the author was saying to a chap called Paris that the beer was sour. Not sure about the yw, it could be part one form of the verb 'to be'. "the beer is sour"; or, it could be the Welsh rendering of 'you': "Paris, you, the beer is sour." Don't know

But the point is that, never, at some previous time in Welsh history would it be at all likely for a Welshman to deliberately & amusingly intertwine the two languages in this way and moreover to [illegible] the technical words of command in English (a which any – [illegible] have to be used. – & to keep the actual Welsh for sundry remarks or descriptions 'was not any easy achievement. I don't know what those who really know the stuff say of it. Perhaps there were in the mid 16th Cent. other attempts of this kind.

even some sort of English

(17)

In a sense, Edward Longshanks final destruction of the House of Gwynedd in 1282-3 was but the fulfilment of what William the Conqueror had laid down in principle two ~~centuries~~ centuries earlier, or just under.

But had that not been then the Age of the Princes (12th & 13th centuries) could not have been. You know the welsh term Gogynfeirdd meaning 'rather early bards' in contrast with the group called Cynfeirdd 'early bards'; with the first of the Gogynfeirdd poetry was made by the court poet of Gruffydd ap Cynan at Aberffraw c. 1100. His name was Meilyr (they call Meilyr the Poet — and the two last of the Gogynfeirdd were the two great poets who both wrote marwnadau 'elegies' for Llywelyn ap Gruffydd in that comfortless winter of 1282-3.

That marwnad is the only poem of his that has survived.

Why all this? You will say. Well, it was thought and asserted as certain for centuries that when Gruffydd ap Cynan returned to Dublin he brought with him Irish harpists and Irish poets of the bardic schools of Ireland, and thus resuscitated & determined the welsh schools of instrumental & vocal art.

I agree that this view is unproven, but it is certain that Gruffydd had a special love of the art-forms in which he had been brought up & that he retained Irish harpists & singers at his court to the end.

I can recall his name, but once when he was unfortunately attacking a Norman stronghold in Ynys Fôn, one of the casualties was his favourite Irish harpist.

As I have said, after 1100 the Normans (Giraldus confirms this nearly a century later) for whatever reason or reasons decided that it was too difficult

to hold north-west Wales & the island of Môn. They had to put their feudal theories in to filing-boxes & admit that there was a Welsh native ruling house in Wales. I suppose they had not yet the cash, the war material, even the men in sufficient numbers. It was too chancey, & the loss too great.

Anyhow, under some arrangements we don't know about, Gryffydd ap Cynon returned from Dublin in 1100 & was admitted to be the holder of his grandfather, Iago's royal seat at Aberffraw. There are reasons for thinking that this could have only been managed with the good-will or anying admission of The Earl of Chester, his like long enemy. A couple of years later he had crossed Menai & became master of Gwynedd as far east as the Conwy. All Welsh territories, great or small, were divided, like Roman ones, into 'upper' & 'lower'. Gwynedd west of the Conwy was Gwynedd Uchaf (Upper Venedotia) & east of the Conwy Gwynydd Isaf, (Lower Gwynedd) I remember, when I was a child, thinking it odd that Southern England, London, Home counties etc was said in Roman times to be in 'Upper Britannia' because I could think only of 'upper' being north of south and in simply tiny bits of land in Wales one is above or below a little stream or perhaps a wood — as Bangor-is-coed 'the bangor below the wood' where those chanting monks were killed, according to old Bede, and again in a bit of land called Is Dulas because it was on the east side of tiny stream called Afon Dulas.

I once asked Saunders, who is a proper professional scholar in Welsh literature — he retired a year ago. — but who knows Irish (& is in fact married to an Irish wife) about this similarity & dissimilarity between the two — it's some years ago, but as far as I can remember he said well, as a Celtic scholar one has to know the roots and where the Welsh & Irish word is basically the same, but it

[illegible] / on my life-time

hostilities the student of Welsh matters has to encounter. For though ~~[illegible]~~ the University studies have, no doubt either all the professional academic specialist introduced in know-how; as such, institutions anywhere else. These old unconscious memories of Nonconformist Wales when life centred row a thousand chapels and when every penny was saved over the years to enable ~~[illegible]~~ a son to get a degree to be a minister of one or other of the denominations still lingers on in some circles or to some ~~[illegible]~~ extent. To know of Welsh saints & princes & of wars with the English & pagan myths & languages no doubt has its place along with technocracies of all sorts, but you can't have nearly three centuries of Nonconformity & wales without it leaving some effect — far easier to be aware of than to ~~[illegible]~~ delineate.

Implications are sometimes made that Dylan Thomas knew no Welsh though born in Abertawe like his, very differing mate, Vernon, Watkins. I knew them sufficiently well to sense two very differing kinds of 'Welshness' — but how different! In their letters to each it is evident they ~~[illegible]~~ discussed metrics without end. But it was English metrics — Keats & Co. well, Hopkins, but it was via Hopkins that Dylan (largely at least) delved for his Welsh rhythms. Vernon was highly educated & as you know read in mod. Languages at Cambridge — translated some Jerry &, I think, some Italian — but it puzzled me greatly that he, with his gift for Lexquisities, translated no Welsh. In fact I ventured to say that I thought this was strange, but could get no helpful answer in him on this point.

I dont know ~~[illegible]~~

~~[illegible]~~

~~[illegible]~~

~~[illegible]~~

~~[illegible]~~

~~[illegible]~~

~~[illegible]~~

Something left out

For [illegible] (20)

He was one of the nicest, kindest person I've ever met. He called on me once or twice when I lived on Harrow Hill, should he chance to be in the environs of London.

We talked once or twice about Dylan, but I still could not what they had in common any more than I could be the published letters.

I could see that they had spent years communicating with each other about the rhythms, correspondences, assonances, ~~[illegible]~~ 'feet', 'quality' & 'quality' in this or that verse-ification that Keats was discussed a good bit. — Hopkins, of course, for it appears that much of the Welsh juxtaposition of sounds Dylan derived from Hopkins — for to hear a line or two of Gerard M.H. read is to recognize the kind of correspondences the medieval Welsh poets (in particular) took delight ~~in~~ in.

In brief, certain (not all) of Hopkins poems give one a much clearer idea of the feeling — the form, not the content, of the hi-polished Welsh verse made for the 'noblemen' ("the 'princes' ~~were~~ having no longer any existence)" than anything else I can think of.

The Irish scholar & translator Frank O'Connor remarks that the Irish have been more fortunate than the Welsh with regard the translation of their native verse & this is, I guess, extremely true. For there is terribly little English translation of Welsh verse that even more or less works. Only try now & again a bit a line may seem worth anything. If I know next to nothing of Welsh, then I know absolutely nothing of what to look for in Irish verse — but I do know that the extremely subtle skill of interweaving 'forms' was regarded as an absolutely essential to greatness in Welsh bardic poetry — the 'content' & the 'form' had to be totally wed. but on the later stages it is clear

is very seldom that in speech one would quickly ~~[illegible]~~ recognise the identity. The centuries & centuries of separation, the total difference of accentuation, & the extreme difference in the rhythm of the two languages militate against recognition even in words or passages that are close cousins.

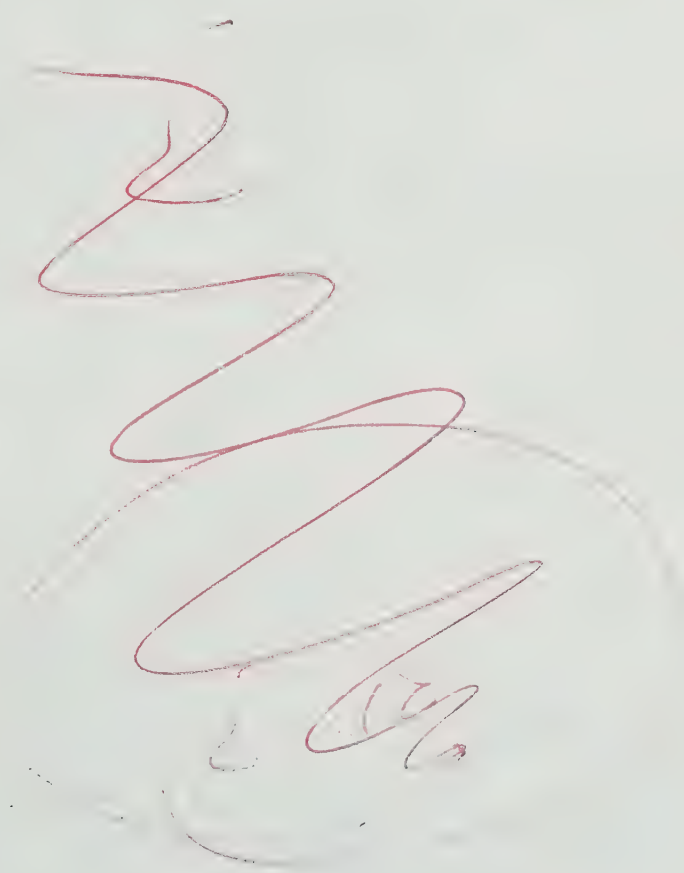
But I see from your example of the aspiration of Padraig to ~~[illegible]~~ Phadraig that it's the kind of thing that happens in Welsh.

For example gwyn (masculine) gwen (fem) stand for 'white' and 'blessed' or just 'jolly nice'. And the word for Gwynedd (the ~~county~~ district) is feminine, & if you wanted to say lovely or blessed land of Gwynedd you'd mutate the gwen to wen — Gwynedd Wen (I hope that's right!)

Why is it that aspiration is so terribly important. Ben Jonson has a having thing and it is his Grammar that Stan. M. made a reprint of ~~[illegible]~~ away back in the 1930's I think.

He remarks how in Welsh it is used with important effect. — it's especially nice in the middle of words, e.g. the girl's name: Angharad, is heavenly with the aspirate very strong, but awful if left out or hardened. In English we don't have many words do we that require pronounced aspiration in the middle or thereabouts, but lots initially. Was my interest in what you said about Teilhard de Chardin, — partly because 'La nostalgie du front' is precisely, word for word, what I more than once heard French officers say. — but in the circumstances or at the time it seemed only to confirm to hearing a British officer saying he would be glad to be back where there was something to do you could never tell (at least I couldn't) whether this was real or false. But, somehow 'La nostalgie du front' sums up a whole thing in the French vocabulary. But I don't know why.

But as does the memory of those doleful bent French ~~peasants~~ stamping by the road as ~~[illegible]~~ we marched to the line: Plenty blesses, no good lives in trenches — strange how some phrases stay in the mind.



Kingdom of Gwynedd again extended to the river Conwy. That river had always been the dividing line. The ancient Welsh native kingdom of Gwynedd or Venedota, like any other division of Welsh territory, had, like the ~~[illegible]~~ Roman land an 'upper' & a 'lower' part. The part west of the Conwy was 'Gwynedd Uchaf' 'Upper Gwynedd' that included Anglesey where the principle llys or 'court' was, at Aberffraw. The land east of the Conwy, as far as the river Dee, was 'Lower Gwynedd'. This 'Lower Gwynedd' was continuously fought over, that is to say only the stronger of the princes of Aberffraw could actually claim to rule in Lower Gwynedd. Once a Norman Earldom was established at Chester. As early as William the Conqueror a putsch into Welsh territory had been made for Chester and Robert de Belême (think) had built a motte & bailey as the ~~[illegible]~~ far west ~~[illegible]~~ on the coast of Degannwy under the protection of the Great Orme's Head, and was granted a chater to make what war he chose against the Welsh west of that point. & the lands so taken and governed would be part of the feudal holdings of the realm — there was ~~some~~ ~~[illegible]~~ small money-payment yearly to the crown — a mere token. This would have meant that all Gwynedd would cease to be a ~~principality~~ kindom and home either in a single Earldom or a number of lesser fiefs held of the earl who in turn held it direct of the king.

But whatever did actually happen on Ynys Fon in 1100 (& that, unless further stuff turns up we shall never know) seems to have made the Norman decide ~~it~~ impossible to hold north

Wales without classes trouble & complications & expences

It is rather important to remember this. For throughout all English constitutional history, the style & title of man invested as 'prince of Wales' is, firstly, Earl of Chester. When the lord Edward heir to Henry III took the title Earl of Chester ~~[illegible]~~ into his own hands, it meant that 'prince of Wales' would, most likely follow. As we know, in the

recent pageantry at Caerarvon Castle, the figure to be invested was not made prince of Wales and Earl of Chester but in the reverse order, Earl of Chester & prince of Wales — it is is purely English feudal terms that the Earl of Chester is also prince of Wales. And the matter developed 'naturally' enough. There had for centuries been earls of Chester with pretty wide territories, in the Pennies, for example. But they had no pretentions to be principes Wallie. Thus they might be on fairly good terms or bad with their nearest ruler to the the west, the King of ~~Aberffraw~~ Gwynedd whose court was normally at Aberffraw on Anglesey, or the King of Powys to the south-west with whom he was more familiar on the whole. But when after 1066 the Norman King placed powerful and assertive earls at Chester, Shrewsbury, etc. the atmosphere changed. The kingdoms or provinces or principalities of the Welsh lands became areas to be absorbed by Lords Marcher, and the territory of a long line of Welsh rulers especially if it had shown valleies & good soil was the very place for a new castle, with the ancient dues and rents now payable to the new Norman Lord. If the displaced native ruler chose to take to the higher lands & to the tangled, unfruitful woods and retain his native title and with bands of young men make raids & forays sometimes inflicting serious damage on the new settlement, well, that was part of life on the border lands. And usually the 'kings men' held what they or their fathers had taken & there were by no means lacking Welshmen to conform to the new and more settled way of life.

To return to the particular, it would, I think, be true to say, that Gryffydd ap Cynan, Irish, Viking-Welsh, saved the Kingdom of Gwynedd from literally ceasing to be & becoming either a single Earldom or a number of lesser fiefs. Only feudal tenure to the earl who however had held it direct from the English Crown.

~~But evidently the friendship with Edward, this marriage & settlement did not compensate for the behavior of the English officials and the extreme~~

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Yet the Kingdom have gone away sorry

But for the ceaseless conflict between Gruffydd et Cynan's successors with the Anglo Norman power it's obvious that Welsh bardic court-poetry would have been different. His son Owain ap Gruffydd (Owain Gwynedd) shut his whole life consolidating the land & little kingdom his father had left him & here made the little state with its seat at Aberffraw in Anglesey, a genuine Welsh-ruler territory not only to the Conwy but to the Dee and made fresh conquests to the south at the expense of Meirionnedd & Ceredigion (Cardiganshire) which was neither part of Powys or Dyfed historically since the break-up of the Roman rule. Henry II began to take a consolidated Welsh power seriously & invaded the country in great force. There was little or no fighting and the King of Gwynedd submitted to negotiations – he lost no territory it seems, had to pay large indemnity of head of cattle and do feudal homage to the English King.

Apart from a prolonged war of destruction he had no alternative. – It is said that it was at this time that the style Brenin, (rhi, rex) was abandoned for princeps (Tywysog) and remained – there were now no reges in Wales but only types of sub-reguli, lords of territory, arglwyddi, lywau 'leaders', (literally 'nudders') but Llywelyn the Last (K. 1282) adopted the form princeps Wallie and this was recognised by the English government & by Otto Buonno the Papal Legate as having authority over the whole of the Welsh lands – about a third of modern Wales, but at least it was an admission that there was a princeps Wallie with all the rights & status of the office of a prince.

He is always spoken of with affection as ein llywolaf, 'our last ruler', but actually there was his unfortunate, prince Dafydd, his brother, who legally succeeded him when he was killed on Dec 11th 1282. What really happened at Irfon Bridge we shall never know unless some chance evidence turns up. It's fully of contradictions. And Archbishop John Pecham's letter to the King, at Rhuddlan sounds to me to be hiding information, and certainly full of fear least certain names should leak out. I think there was a trap set

Iowa Gwynedd

Llywelyn the last

whereby the Prince was separated from his army, and he was surrounded with a few immediate followers. We know that on the morning of the battle, a Cistercian monk sang mass for him at Llangantan, on the low hills where his forces had been stationed a couple of miles north west of Irfon-Bridge but led into the English castle a tower of Llanfair ym Muellt. ('the church of St Mary in the cantref of Buellt.' — now 'Builth Wells') Archbishop Pecham tells us the Roger (or Edmund) Mortimer had pinched the mass vestments as they had been evidently left in a hurry by the escaping remnants of the Prince's men. Apart from Llywelyn's forces reaching Llangantan by an across-Wales march from Snowdonia, where the Lord Dafydd was in charge, after the defeat of Edward's Gascons under Luc de Tuny at Moel-y-Don on Menai, and some peace negotiations attempted by Pecham between the Lord King & the Welsh leaders in Nov. 1282, we know nothing except that Llywelyn reached the rising ground and Llangantan, heard Mass on the morning of Dec 11th & was killed by the Mortimers; later that same day. He was wounded and asked for a priest, but whether he was executed while still alive, by Mortimer, we do not know. Mortimer gave a 'copy' of letters found on the Prince's body to the Archbishop. So what they contained we do not know either. There is no record of them in the official correspondence, only this reference in Pecham: Epistolae. Mortimer's servants gave evidence that the wounded prince asked that a priest be sent him.

As for his brother the Lord Dafydd, his story is strange & terrible indeed. He was right in with the King for years, who knighted him and he was against the Welsh cause in the war of 1277. & indeed led some of the King's forces against Llywelyn. He had even hatched a plot with a prince of Powys against Llywelyn's life. But after appearing once to answer certain charges & agreeing to appear again, seems it have fled to England under the King's protection. His wife was (Elizabeth(?)) daughter of Kinh of Robert Ferrers & a widow of a le Strange and a cousin of the King's. He was given extensive lands in north-eastern Wales, but evidently became exhausted with the English officials & the oppression of his subjects

In Public Record Office I think complete.

and indeed increased misery of his Welsh subjects that he hatched a plot whereby Harwarde Castle was suddenly attacked on Palm Sunday 1283, taken by storm &, in rapid succession, other castles and almost simultaneously the Welsh rose in far separated parts of Wales. It looks like a preconcerted movement, yet Llywelyn Prince of Wales, seem to have known nothing of it — his wife, Simon de Montfort's daughter, married the previous year at the great door of Worcester Cathedral with a great show of friendship by Edward I., was now expected soon to have her first child, 't be called, if a girl, Gwenllian.

The princely residence was on the coast of Western Gwynedd, at a place with the charming name of 'Aber of the White Shells'

It is now a tiny village called 'Aber', no signs have been archaeologically disclosed of what must have been extensive works — including the great hall, the various apartments for the princess & her maids, the stables for the princes personal horse-guard, but I understand nothing remains.

'Aber' is not to be confused with 'Aberconwy'

Aberconwy was a cistercian monastery but at the conquest in 1282-3 Edward managed to get permission to have the monastery moved to another site & at the same time built Conwy Castle & town. Such is the date one way or another, of all native Welsh medieval remains. It's almost uncanny that almost everything genuinely Welsh was swept away absolutely by the English conquest.

But to return to Prince David or Dafydd. He was without doubt his brother's heir when Llywelyn was killed in Dec 1282. He was accepted by the Council as prince of Wales & Llywelyn's seneschal became his & Reeds were signed as late as May 1283 at Llangollen attested by the Seneschal & under David's privy-seal. But by Midsummer Day 1283, he had been trapped in the mountains by Edward's Welsh-shirt police along with his two sons & his wife & taken in chains to Rhuddlan — Edward refused to see him, but appointed a

day in Oct. for the meeting of the temporal lords of the realm (the lords spiritual apparently have been excluded) to try the Knighted David ap Gruffydd for treason. He was adjudged guilty and hung drawn & quartered at Shrewsbury. His two sons were imprisoned for life at Bristol & both died there — one mercifully fairly soon, the other after some number of years. Son of their sisters, a cousin of the babe Gwenllian, Llywelyn's own child, was sent like her cousin to far off East Anglia to a nunnery, but not to Semprinham, where he little cousin was, but some thirty miles away. The princess Gwenllian may never have known her origins for she was a babe in arms when taken under guard to Semprinham from 'Aber of the White Shells' or elsewhere in Gwynedd Wen. But Dafydd's (David's) daughter was older & worse have known of these grim affairs. Prince David's widow, eventually obtained some part of her dowry from the relatives of her previous husband's (a Marshall.) — Lord Ferrers.

January. Thus it was that the 'Hammer of the Scots,' made a final & total end of the native line that reigned in part of Wales since rose at 400 AD. Professor Powicke and many Welsh as well as English historians seem to believe that Edward Longshanks had no desire to terminate the native Welsh line or lines but was forced to do so by the shifty ways of Llywelyn & other Welshmen, especially, of course Dafydd who did play a strange game, but less strange when one considers the many cross-currents of tradition & custom in which, as brother of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd he was born. The equality of brothers in inheritance — in short the principle of 'gavael' in property and in status runs so deeply that we who take primogeniture for granted can only dimly understand.

Earlier in Welsh history, a really lovely poet, Hywel ap Owain Gwynedd, was ambushed by his half-brothers & killed

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because, for all his admitted ability as a soldier and shrewd excellence as a poet, he was ~~the son of~~ not the son of Owain Gwynedd's wife, Cristin, but of an Irish girl his father had been attached to. None of his virtues could save him. Cristin, I suppose, eager her own sons to do the deed, ~~but~~ & there may have been other reasons, but anyway this brilliant Yg man and most admirable poet (it ~~are~~ could have in translation) was set upon by unequal numbers in Ynys Fon & slain. One of the survivors wrote a poem interesting but Mona Insula is Ynys Fon in honour of Hywyl, whence we shall not have the details. Whereas Mona alone is just Môn with a circumflex acut to lengthen the ô — dont know what law of phonetics stands behind this, but I'm bet there is one.

In Ynys the initial yn is pronounced 'un' & the final ys, as 'iss' Is there any difference of sound in Gaelic between the two vowels in, say, Innis Hus or that? It's odd, ~~the~~ I suppose because we use 'strait' so meritoth of a channel of water such as "Menai strait" but in Welsh I dont believe they call Menai by a special name at all but just as Afon (river) Fenai or ~~[illegible]~~ or just Y Fenai

That's an odd sounding word you mention as plural or inhara Fisheries — ~~[illegible]~~ Worra has the feel of a Norrie word for some reason.

Forgive this appalling ramble about Welsh history — & ~~[illegible]~~ the pages dont run on to make sense.

I'll attend to your very interesting remarks next letter. Still find writing difficult that's why this stuff is not really writing, but rather an excuse for not writing; ~~[illegible]~~ also neglecting all sorts of letters I ought to attend to — but can't.

and Arfon means means the bit of land 'against' or by Môn. So that 'Caernarvon' means only 'the Fort [on the shore] opposite the island of Mona.

30 29(30)

Anyway I'll ~~[illegible]~~ put it in some envelope & ask Nancy Sandars, that archaeologist, who wrote the Agenda issue, to post it. She is reckoning to coming over to visit me tomorrow.

Much love to you dear René & Joan of course.

Wish I could feel more, so to say, able to concentrate & more active, but it is is better than a week or so back — but thus, and re-learning to walk is a long job, obviously.

Good [illegible]

~~[illegible]~~ Love by

Dorothy

Everything bear to go wrong at once, poor darling Elsie's old father has died, just when they, Valerie & Michael are in a mess over the ~~[illegible]~~ slate quarry. She had to go down to South Wales with the three children to deal with all the stuff to do with the father's funeral. He lived alone in a cottage ~~[illegible]~~ & who died ~~[illegible]~~ two years ago. Mercifully he did not suffer but must have had a heart attack & died very quickly. I always wish I had met him. He was ~~[illegible]~~ that mining generation of the last century — that now rapidly cease to be. — lux perpetua luceat ~~[illegible]~~

Letter to Rene Hague

29 pages
complete

Welsh medieval history.

~~July~~
~~July 1978~~
July 1970